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News Release

Mayor Bob Filner Advocates for an Efficient Border as part of Federal Immigration Reform

Is working for improved ports of entry to increase bilateral commerce

(San Diego) -- As head of the City with the nation's busiest ports of entry, Mayor Bob Filner is weighing in on the immigration reform debate to encourage federal lawmakers to invest in border communities as part of comprehensive immigration reform.

Today, the Mayor met with Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and law enforcement leaders throughout the region to give feedback on immigration policy and the security of the border. He also had a message for politicians in the Nation's capitol.

"We want our lawmakers in DC to know that local border mayors and police chiefs need to be part of the discussion on border security," said Filner. "Crime along the border has decreased over the last decade and San Diego is an example of that."

"We need to re-direct investment into staffing our land Ports of Entry and the use of technology to improve our long wait times. The Secretary and I agree that efficiency *is* security," said Mayor Filner.

The San Diego Ports of Entry are a critical gateway to bilateral trade with Mexico that now totals nearly half a trillion dollars, making Mexico the second largest market for U.S. exports and the third largest trading partner of the United States.

This gateway, like many others along the southern border, has become a bottleneck with wait times at the Ports of Entry now reaching as long as five hours due to poor infrastructure at the ports.

If Ports of Entry continue to be neglected, the U.S. Commerce Department projects that the average time to get through these ports to enter the United States will continue to rise, resulting in a delay that could cost a total of \$12 billion by 2017, according to Department estimates.

The San Diego Association of Governments in 2006 found that inefficient border crossings in San Diego alone impact more than 100,000 jobs due to long wait times at the border. San Diego's economy loses \$6 billion per year!

"Better Ports of Entry will make our country safer and help stimulate the economy on both sides of the border," said Filner. "The border region cannot be treated with an enforcement-only approach. We need comprehensive and commonsense solutions that treat border communities as vital gateways to bilateral trade and bilateral relationships that benefit us all."

Filner will work with San Diego's Congressional delegation and will reach out to other border mayors to advocate for federal resources that improve port infrastructure and improve oversight and accountability of border enforcement operations. "One in every twenty-four workers in the United States depends on the commerce between our two countries," said Filner. "When Ports of Entry become bottlenecks, the entire country loses out."

Additional Impacts of border trade and commerce:

- According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, more than 40 million people (26% of all people entering the country nationally) and roughly 745,000 trucks (more than 15% of all trucks entering the country) crossed into the United States in 2011 through the San Diego Ports of Entry at San Ysidro and Otay. This amounts to over 111,000 people and 2,000 trucks entering each day, which are mirrored by roughly the same amount entering Mexico each day.
- A survey completed in 2011 by the San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce and the South County Economic Development Council of Border Crossers in the San Diego area indicates that most border crossers are border residents: 71 percent cross the border weekly and 27 percent cross daily. The survey also indicates that crossers originate from both sides of the border: 38 percent are American citizens and 44 percent are Mexican citizens, with another 18 percent originating in other countries.

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